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Mississippi State Senate

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Appropriations
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Ethics
Forestry
Judiciary, Division B
Labor
Oil, Gas, and other Minerals

SENATOR ALBERT BUTLER

36th District
Claiborne, Copiah, Hinds & Jefferson Counties
P. O. Box 614
Port Gibson, Mississippi 39150

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

September 30, 2011

The Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

ORIGINAL

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I am writing to voice my support for the AT&T and T-Mobile merger and other initiatives that bring jobs and high-speed Internet connectivity to underserved rural communities.

A recent survey found Mississippi has the lowest rate of Internet access in the nation. Only 59% of Mississippians have Internet access, and just one-third has high-speed broadband service. The problem is particularly acute for rural households in our state, which are one-tenth as likely as urban households to have access to high-speed networks.

I share the view expressed in the commission's rural broadband report that all Americans, whether they live in rural or urban areas, should have access to affordable broadband service. Here in Mississippi, the expansion of broadband to underserved rural areas would be transformative, providing citizens the ability to access high-tech tools for health care, education, community development and civic renewal. At the same time, broadband would strengthen the hand of small businesses in our community and give them the tools they need to succeed in a highly competitive global economy.

The expansion of AT&T's high-speed network will also benefit the economy by creating between 55,000 and 96,000 jobs. That is particularly welcome news to the unemployed men and women in rural Southwest Mississippi, who will benefit directly from jobs in the telecommunications industry, and indirectly from the economic opportunities created when rural businesses finally gain access to high-speed broadband service.

We cannot afford to let rural communities fall behind when it comes to economic development and quality of life. The AT&T and T-Mobile merger will bring better broadband to rural

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communities, leveling the playing field for residents in rural areas and providing a needed boost to the national economy. I urge you to support the merger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Albert Butler". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sen. Albert Butler

AB/mpa

cc: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell